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To the Editor:

Professor Chomsky's article on the menace of liberal scholarship (January 2) takes off against such "defense intellectuals" as Huntington, Brzezinski, Wolf, Wohlstetter, Ellsberg and Schelling, and contrasts certain of their statements with the more enlightened views of Soviet Academician Sakharov, Professor Chomsky, and myself. Professor Chomsky has plenty of insight in perceiving my superior profundity, humanitarianism, and general high-class wisdom. However, the same modesty and rationality that set me above the mass of intellectual bootlickers and power-hungry establishmentarians that hang out around Rand force me to acknowledge that I must somehow, in ways unknown to me, have harmed Professor Chomsky. How else can I explain his action in according me a niche in his tiny pantheon? This letter constitute my apology to him and my request for defenestration from Olympus.

Yes, I agree that big power policy toward underdeveloped countries is by and large self-serving, confused, and obsessed by frequently spurious or fallacious preoccupations with power politics. Yes, reciprocal paranoia (you scratch my bomb, I'll scratch yours) is the order of the day in big power relations. Yes, U.S. policies in the Vietnam war have been weird, frightening, and often just plain dumb -- swinging from perverted humanitarianism to perverted Machtpolitik to perverted views of self-interest and of reality. At times, only paranoia seems constant in the flux of our policies.

But our agreement is trivial. I want no part of any world view that blames the whole mess primarily on the defects of America's ruling classes as enriched by the defense intellectuals licking up a high gloss of scientism on their masters' boots.

Why does Chomsky choose to devote less than three paragraphs of his long, long essay to the roles played by enemies of the United States, who are also, and more important, enemies of libertarian societies? Is it paranoid to suggest that the biggest reason for the existence of our vast military-industrial establishment, with its intellectual associations, is that the United States has powerful enemies who wish us, and many of the values that Chomsky endorses, ill? Of course, the consequent system sets up self-perpetuating forces that I deplore. Therefore, I think Chomsky is right in wanting to combat them, and in objecting to the tendencies that encourage socially irrelevant and therefore potentially dangerous technocratic approaches to behavioral studies. Snaffle, curb and bit, fine, but where, in Chomsky's muse, is the bloody horse?

American society is bitterly divided and that may, as Chomsky suggests, be a fine thing. But it would be rotten for all Americans and most of the rest of the world if we somehow accepted the implicit proposition that the Vietnamese situation was nothing but a product of Western imperialism. Once Russia and China get the idea that we won't impose our ways on these countries, then they will in leisure impose their own. Yes, Sophistica, there is a naughty man and we should give a damn, although not to the point of destroying Vietnam and other objects of our benevolence. But this world is, in part, a jungle, a condition that we can't change today or tomorrow, and that we ignore at our peril.

I don't know, and neither does anyone else, whether the installation of Communist regimes in underdeveloped countries is good or bad for these countries, the U.S. and the rest of the world, although I clearly have my suspicions. But I think intellectual honesty should lead Chomsky and those who share his views to recognize that the issues are a lot too tough to solve just by calling for a general revolt of intellectuals against the system. And, am I being unkind to suggest that the question of intellectual honesty also arises when in citing Academician Sakharov's cis-Atlantic counterpart, Chomsky fails to point out that "the American economist, John Pincus" is an employee of The Rand Corporation? He is, after all, quite punctilious in specifying the Rand affiliation of people with whom he disagrees, such as Wolf; or whom he cites as admitting the futility of policies that they have been identified with, such as Ellsberg.

Yours,

John Pincus

John Pincus

JP:sw

bcc: D. Ellsberg
B. Haydon
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G. Shubert
A. Wohlstetter
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